

Fiftieth Anniversary Banquet

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART



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Ingalls Library

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The Sheraton-Cleveland Hotel

June 13, 1966

09.23.11

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87808-092511

Menu

Lobster and Crabmeat Cocktail Supreme
with Beluga Caviar

Roast Prime Sirloin Strips
Bordelaise Sauce

Parslied Potato

Glazed Baby Carrots

Princess Salad
White Asparagus on Bibb Lettuce
Gourmet Dressing

Lemon Ice with Crème de Menthe
Petits Fours

Coffee

Château La Fleur Petrus 1962

Speakers

John S. Wilbur, Trustee, *Master of Ceremonies*

Mrs. R. Henry Norweb, President of the Board of Trustees

Sherman E. Lee, Director

Sir Frank Francis, Director of the British Museum

Address

Sir Frank Francis, K.C.B., F.S.A., F.M.A.
Director of the British Museum

Μουσείο, Museum, Das Museum, Le Musée. It is as well that Museum has never been looked upon as of the feminine gender. "One should never trust a woman who tells one her real age," says Oscar Wilde. "A woman who would tell one that would tell one anything!" Feminine coquetry might never have allowed us to proclaim this festival of celebration, this joyous occasion—this golden jubilee of The Cleveland Museum of Art. And we should not have enjoyed this splendid feast and brilliant company. Madam President, you have done me and the institution to which I belong, great honor by inviting me and my wife not only to be with you on this spectacular occasion, but to be the mouthpiece of all the world's rejoicing. In particular I am glad to be able to offer you on behalf of the British Museum, allegedly the world's oldest public museum, our warmest congratulations on a brilliant creation fifty years ago and on fifty years of magnificent achievement and fulfillment. Add to that our cordial good wishes for the future.

What does that future hold out for us as curators or patrons of a great museum? Who in this year of grace 1966 can really tell? We can only plan within our puny experience, with no conception, nowadays, what wonders—or horrors—the world may not have in store for us. Thinking along these lines my mind goes back inevitably to the British Museum after *its* first fifty years. That too was a time of turmoil and uncertainty. We imagine with our preoccupations of the present that the tempo then must have been incredibly slow by comparison with what it is today. But let me remind you what was

happening. Joseph Planta, my then predecessor, had only recently received into his possession the great collections of Egyptian antiquities, including the Rosetta Stone, which had been gathered together at Napoleon's instance, at Cairo, and which, after the Battle of the Nile in 1801, were ceded to Britain. But life had even more exciting surprises in store: shortly after the British Museum's fiftieth birthday, it acquired the Towneley collection of Greek and Roman sculptures to be followed nine years later by the bronzes, coins, gems, and drawings from the same collection, and then in 1816 by the Elgin marbles, the sculptures from the Parthenon, themselves. Before Planta ceased to be Director, or, as he was then called, Principal Librarian of the British Museum, he had superintended the acquisition of the Phigaleian sculptures from Arcadia and the sculptures, bronzes, coins, and other smaller antiquities bequeathed by Horace Walpole's "Knight of the Brazen Milk Pot," Richard Payne Knight.

It is unlikely, to say the least, that the next fifty years will see the acquisition either by The Cleveland Museum of Art or by the British Museum or, indeed, by any museum, of antiquities comparable in range or quality with these. But as Planta must have murmured to himself from time to time, you never know what comes next!

I suppose, however, we can be pretty certain that museums will be subjected to greater and greater demands from the public for easier access, for greater amenities, and more and more popular information. The effects of these pressures may well be more in evidence in Europe than in the United States of America, where so much has been and is being done to bring museums and their collections into the ken of the public. That such pressures were being exercised on the British Museum when *it* was fifty years old, is clear from the fact that in 1804 "a plan for the more easy admission to the British Museum" was adopted. Hitherto an extreme caution had been exercised in dealing with that sensitive, but dangerous body, the public. The officer in charge had been directed that, "if either from his own observation or from any other particular circumstance, he should judge any persons applying for, or bringing a ticket of, admission, to be improper or unfit to be admitted into the Museum, he

shall not suffer them to be admitted thereunto, but shall put them off in the most prudent and least offensive manner that he can." As no more than fifteen tickets per hour of admittance were granted and as each party of visitors had to be personally conducted through the galleries by an officer of the Museum, it is no wonder that the plan for easier admission was adopted. Yet this new plan provided for only seventy-five persons a day! A very different matter from the thousands who now daily throng our galleries.

These thousands of visitors, however unconsciously, are providing the museums and galleries with their greatest contemporary problem. What and how important a part have the museums to play in helping the world to solve its social problems, and how can they square this with their obligations to scholarship? Let me remind you of a passage in a recent book, *The World We Have Lost* by Peter Laslett: "We now inhabit a world of immeasurable wealth and many of us are possessed of a power and a consequence never before known on such a scale. Our society is marked by an intense search after status and after symbols to express it. . . . We want contradictory things, a system of status and social equality." Have museums a part to play in finding a solution to this dilemma? In restoring contentment to man as a social being, and purpose and joy to man as a creative worker? "Historical knowledge is knowledge to do with ourselves now. . . . All historical knowledge, from one point of view, and that an important and legitimate one, is knowledge about ourselves, and the insistence on understanding by contrast."

Is it possible for museums and galleries to be all things to all men? This is a problem which is facing all the great museums in the world, be they in Cleveland, New York, Paris, or London. The tasks of a museum or gallery are first the acquisition and preservation of works of art and craftsmanship or antiquity, and second their exploitation (horrid word) for the public, under which wide term are included scholars, connoisseurs, and the ordinary man in the street. In order to carry out these tasks adequately the museum curator must be able to bring to bear on his antiquities or works of art, scholarship and learning, a gift for display, and a good deal of common sense. In the past, display was

a secondary matter (and I may say in parenthesis his successors of the present day sometimes wonder how much common sense he had!) and the museum curator was able to apply himself to his collections, and by his studies and his work on the objects under his care to become a recognized scholar. As a result he was able to add judiciously to his collections and build up material for the delectation of scholars and connoisseurs and for the public. Broadly speaking, this is still possible in some museums and galleries on both sides of the Atlantic and many of our professional colleagues are recognized authorities in particular fields of study. But it is all the time becoming more and more difficult to maintain this important aspect of the museum curator's work. The routine reception and recording of objects, conservation, answering inquiries, receiving visitors, arranging exhibitions and exhibits, preparing loans for exhibitions in other galleries, ensuring security, preparing for photography, radio, television, producing educational services for children, and the many other educational and informational activities which now fall into the ambit of the museum, all impinge increasingly on the time for scholarly study. It is in my view an obligation on the museum director to protect his professional staff from the encroachments of non-scholarly activities—though it is equally necessary for them not to be insulated from the world at large.

It is the museum or gallery which is the real sufferer when the opportunity for scholarly work is diminished. Not only is it in danger of losing its quality and of failing to attract men and women of the right calibre, but it is also losing the fundamental scholarship on which, only, can its services to the public be properly based. The museum or gallery provides the spectacles by which past events and past achievements are seen in their proper focus by people at all levels of knowledge. The museum curator is responsible for the creative reconstruction of the intellectual background against which the great creations of the past are to be viewed. This is indeed a stimulating and rewarding assignment which quickens the imagination of the curator and inspires him, but which he can only meet adequately if he has the necessary scholarly knowledge and experience.

There is a further problem which I must mention, typical perhaps of the present day, but perhaps more common in Britain in the present stage of its political and social development: an emphasis on what are called the living arts—the drama, music, painting, dancing—sometimes at the expense of what I regret are referred to as the dead arts—which include the collection and display of antiquities and works of art. This is, of course, a nonsensical distinction, gravely dangerous to the spiritual richness and well-being of the community, if persisted in. It may be, however, that the distinction reflects a need for museums and galleries, while remembering their obligations to scholarship, to be adventurous in the means they use to bring home to people the living magic of the past. At this point my scholarly colleagues would I am sure look down their noses and indicate that this way destruction lies! But I am unrepentant. I still think it possible, nay desirable, perhaps even essential, to provide with all the weapons in our armoury for those who are unable to re-create the background of museum objects for themselves. I recognize the dangerous temptations to easy, superficial generalizations—which must of course be resisted; but I have yet to be convinced that scholarship, provided its continued existence can be assured, cannot be brought effectively into the market place. This means of course that museum curators should be supermen—but that is a prerequisite which has long been recognized—and at any rate in the case of Cleveland amply realized.

That perceptive critic, the late Eric Newton, in the introduction to his *The Arts of Man* sees in man's power to stand outside himself, one of the basic differences between man and the animals. "Doubtless the tiger and the eagle," he says, "are capable of the major forms of experience—love, hate, hunger, lust. But they do not *contemplate* their experience, marvel at it as something precious or beautiful in its own right. To note that man is a recorder of his own experience is important, for that is equivalent to saying that man is an artist."

It is not, I think, stretching the analogy too far to suggest that a museum, as the recorder and communicator not of its own, but of the world's experiences

and achievements, itself plays the role of a creative artist in the community. If that is true anywhere, it is true of this splendid institution whose fiftieth birthday we are celebrating at this time. Its creative achievements have long been the admiration and envy of other museums in all parts of the world. Founded in June 1916, it set itself from the start to be a gallery of great works of art. With great courage, it has on occasion refused generous gifts because they interfered with its determination to present a unified collection eschewing as far as possible all kinds of isolationism. In maintaining its policies, and following its ideals, it has been supported by many benefactions which can only be described as truly great. I think particularly of such names as Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Wade, Liberty Holden, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph T. King, Mr. and Mrs. Worcester R. Warner, Mrs. Henry A. Everett, Grace Rainey Rogers, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt, John L. Severance, Elisabeth Severance Prentiss, Leonard C. Hanna Jr., and Martha Holden Jennings.

But I recognize also the strength that resides in the vast number of dedicated supporters of the Museum, so many of whom are here tonight. May I say, from the bottom of my heart, how deeply I admire the spirit of your devotion to this great gallery, and offer to you all, speaking as a museum man, my gratitude for your support and your belief in our activities.

You have, collectively, by enabling The Cleveland Museum of Art to make significant acquisitions in many fields, made it one of the great collections in the world, especially in the antiquities of Greece, of the early Christian and medieval world, in Japanese art, in Chinese painting and ceramics, and in many other fields of art.

The superlative results of the collecting and display policies of the successive Presidents of the Trustees, only six in number—William B. Sanders, J. H. Wade, John L. Severance, William S. Mather, Harold T. Clark, and the present holder of this distinguished office, Mrs. Norweb—and of the three directors—Frederic Allen Whiting, William M. Milliken, and Sherman E. Lee—these results are here for all to see. Not all of them, unhappily, are here to receive our congratulations, but no man or woman can hope for a better

monument to their public service than is arranged in the beautiful galleries with which you are all familiar. *Exegerunt monumentum aere perennius.*

I echo Sir Philip Sidney:

“Doubt you to whom my Muse these notes intendeth
Which now my breast o’er charged to music lendeth?
To you, to you all song of praise is due
Only in you my song begins and endeth.”

“And since to look at things in bloom,
Fifty springs are little room,”

may I express the sincere good wishes of all your friends for many more half-centuries to spread the joys of your devising.

This unique vessel of precious metal is one of more than 150 objects to be shown for the first time in the Golden Anniversary Acquisitions Exhibition, September 9—October 16.

Rhyton: *The Angel Dravspa*.

Silver, repoussé and engraved, partially gilt, H. 7½ inches.

Iran(?), Sasanian Period, 4th-5th century A.D.

Purchase, Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Bequest. 64.96



Murillo's famous *Laban* is one of a group of old master acquisitions, three of them Spanish, also to be shown for the first time on September 9.

Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Spanish, 1617-1682.

Laban Searching for His Stolen Household Gods in Jacob's Tent.

Oil on canvas, 95½ x 142½ inches, ca.1665-70.

Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust. 65.469



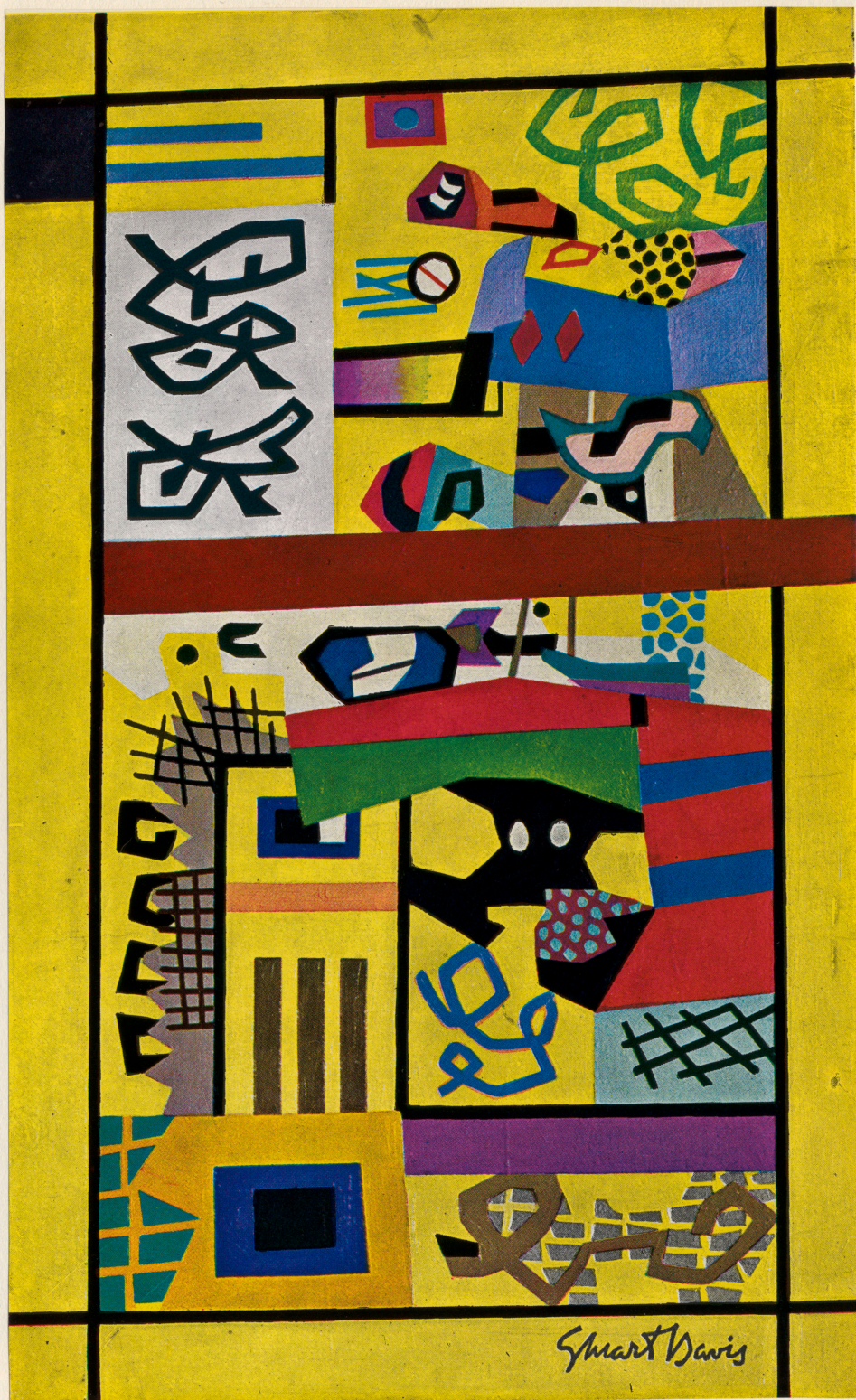
One of 167 paintings and sculptures shown in Fifty Years of Modern Art,
the first Golden Anniversary exhibition, opening tomorrow at 7 P.M.

Stuart Davis, American, 1894-1964.

For Internal Use Only.

Oil on canvas, 45 x 28 inches, 1945.

From the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine.



The *châsse* is among the 130 objects from the churches and museums of France and from museums and collections in this country included in the third important special exhibition of the Golden Anniversary Year, Treasures from Medieval France, November 14—January 29, 1967.

Châsse à médaillons.

Champlevé enamel, H. $7\frac{11}{16}$ inches.

France, early 12th century.

Bellac (Haute-Vienne), Eglise paroissiale.

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